

Soviet Spy Service Changing Tactics

KGB Relies More on Foreigners, Western Sources Say

LONDON (AP)—The Soviet espionage service, the KGB, is shifting tactics and growing in strength, according to intelligence sources in Western Europe.

They say they see a decreasing reliance by the KGB on agents who enter a Western country legally and work in embassies under diplomatic cover. Instead, they see an increasing use of two other types of spy.

One is the "illegal," the agent smuggled in, such as a spy who steps off a freighter at an unwatched port. The other is the citizen of a Western country "turned around" to work for the Soviets.

Both types of agents are harder for Western intelligence services to spot than the highly visible "diplomats."

Smuggling a Russian spy into Britain, for example, is as easy as stepping off a boat.

A dozen British ports, among them Halifax in northern England, Ayr in Scotland and Barry in South Wales, have no immigration or customs officers. Russian freighters carrying crews of 30 and maybe 10 passengers all at these ports from time to time.

It is fairly simple to walk off one of these ships unnoticed and hide in the largely working-class districts near the docks where many people are sympathetic to the local Communist party.

"The KGB are rationalizing their clandestine activities," one Western intelligence source said. "The illegals are more cost-effective."

By that the source meant that an agent working as a diplomat can be costly if he defects and blows the cover of other Russian spies. Illegals and local nationals can be just as effective, and less damaging if caught.

The KGB suffered a major blow here in 1971 when the British government expelled as spies 105 Soviet officials working in the embassy or the trade mission. At the time the British estimated that 75% of the Russian diplomats accredited to London were spies. Their identities are known; and it may be difficult for Moscow to place them abroad again in other embassies.

The Institute for the Study of Conflict, a London group which has access to some British, European and U.S. intelligence reports, estimates, however, that three out of every four Soviet diplomats in Western Europe still work for the KGB.

In Brussels, officials at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization say 250 Soviet diplomats have been expelled from NATO countries in the last five years for espionage activities. The figure includes people nominated by Moscow for posts abroad but refused acceptance by Western governments because of known KGB activities in the past.

Western sources say the proportion of Russian spies working under diplomatic cover has remained steady, but there has been a noticeable shift toward other types of agents such as illegals and locals. These tend to concentrate in areas where the United States has large installations.

"The United States is the main target for Soviet espionage in Europe," a British source said. According to him the prime Soviet goals are to infiltrate into the Pentagon, the State Department, the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency and the FBI.

These organizations are weaker on the periphery than at the center and this is why the Russians try to infiltrate around the edges in Europe, he added.

Sometimes Soviet efforts are transparent. In 1967, for example, after NATO shifted its headquarters to Brussels, the Russians built an assembly plant for their Volga cars nearby. They insisted on a site near NATO although better locations were available elsewhere.

Sometimes the KGB can be brutally obvious. In 1964 Horst Schwirkmann, a West German technician, went to Moscow to remove microphones from a Western embassy there. A KGB agent passed him on a street and injected Schwirkmann with what later was determined to be mustard gas that ate away at his flesh. His life was spared.

Often the KGB is subtle from Eastern Europe or known to be working for intelligence in Western Europe.

Western German authorities estimate that East Germans account for 80% of the Communist bloc spies in their country. They estimate the number of clandestine agents at more than 15,000 at any one time.

These are the kind of numbers that worry Western intelligence services.

"Western governments do not have the resources to match the Soviet effort," a British source said. "The Soviet clandestine effort at information gathering is five times that of the United States and Western Europe combined."

The current questioning of the role of the CIA in the United States is viewed by intelligence agencies in Western Europe with rising concern, because the CIA is a prime source of information for them.

"If the CIA is made completely accountable, we will be less effective," the British intelligence man said.

William E. Colby, director of the CIA, said the KGB's effort to recruit Americans remained extensive. He told the Associated Press annual meeting recently that "some 400 approaches" were made to Americans abroad in the last four years. Some of these efforts, he added, were appeals for aid to the Communist side or an exertion of pressure on individuals thought to be vulnerable.

An important arm in spying today is the research and analysis of nonsecret material, Colby said.

He said the KGB's Institute for the Study of the United States of America is a carbon copy of similar institutes the CIA has set up for the study of the Soviet Union.

Thus a spy in modern times could be someone who simply reads newspapers and other publications of an "enemy" country for the nonsecret material that aids researchers and analysts back home.

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